

Dark Arts and Other Wicked Ideas: Harry Potter, Banned Books, and Intellectual Freedom



Presented by
Michele and Ryan McDaniel

And a number of those who had practiced **magic arts** brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Acts 19:19 (ESV)

Acts 19:19

A grounding text for subsequent Christian responses in restricting and, indeed, burning books and other materials deemed to be harmful or downright evil...

Christ Community Church ALAMOGORDO, N.M. (2001)



Pastor Jack Brock (2001)

- The BBC reported events for the U.K. (1)
- JK Rowling's novels were burnt alongside other items considered to be the work of the devil, including horror books by Stephen King, ouija boards and AC/DC records.
- “Behind that innocent face is the power of satanic darkness.”
- “Harry Potter is the devil and he is destroying people.”

Historical Context

- Socrates the Wise: A Perennial Tale
- Perennial Concerns: Christian Vocabulary
- The Age of Manuscripts
- Transition to the Modern Age
- *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*
- Eucatastrophe: Surprise Ending

Socrates the Wise: A Perennial Tale



By Jacques-Louis David - <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/436105>, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28552>

Socrates the Wise: A Perennial Tale

- He failed to acknowledge the gods of Athens
- He introduced new gods
- He corrupted the youth
- Perennial because...
 - Every society demands a certain orthodoxy be acknowledged
 - Every society is threatened by new ideas about orthodoxy
 - Every society is especially concerned about the “youth” and other naïve or intellectually vulnerable people in their midst

Perennial Concerns: Christian Vocabulary

- Truth Saves
- Falsehood Destroys
- The same perennial concerns that got Socrates killed are described in a Christian vocabulary...
 - Acknowledge Christian orthodoxy
 - Reject new, false and destructive beliefs
 - Protect the youth and intellectually vulnerable

Perennial Concerns: Christian Vocabulary

- *Decretum Gelasianum*
 - 6th – 9th century
 - Approved books of Scripture
 - Disapproved books of “Apocrypha”
 - Precursor to *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*

The Age of Manuscripts

- Manuscripts are:
 - Rare and precious
 - Not widely circulated
 - Held by cathedrals, monasteries, nobility
- Scholars handle orthodoxy and difficult questions
- Degree of free inquiry and debate normal
- The Socratic perennial concerns are relatively manageable

Transition to the Modern Age

- Printing press invented in 1440
- Perennial concerns no longer manageable
- Scripture: Greek, Hebrew, and Translations
- New ideas and interpretations introduced
- Protestant Reformation
- Unity lost... War unleashed

Transition to the Modern Age

- Protestant Reformation
 - Rejects living authority of Church
 - Individuates and multiplies competing orthodoxies
 - Warring states and persecuted minorities
 - Eventually leads to Enlightenment ideas

Index Librorum Prohibitorum

- Catholic so-called “Counter Reformation”
- Council of Trent: 1545-1563
- Launched what has been called by *America*, a Jesuit Catholic magazine: “the most ambitious censorship drive the world has ever known”
(2)
- The *Index* was active from 1559-1966

Index Librorum Prohibitorum

Famous authors to make the *Index* included:

Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Montaigne, Voltaire, Diderot, Victor Hugo, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emanuel Swedenborg, Baruch Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, René Descartes, Francis Bacon, John Milton, John Locke, Blaise Pascal, Edward Gibbon, John Stuart Mill, and Jean-Paul Sartre (added 1959)

Index Librorum Prohibitorum

- “Grimoires” were, of course, prohibited
- No Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry



Eucatastrophe: Redeeming Magic & Saving Myth

- Catastrophe: Literary term for unraveling of a narrative's plot, often used of tragic endings
- Eu: Greek prefix meaning "good"
- J.R.R. Tolkien coined "eucatastrophe" to describe an unexpected turn at the end of a story, wherein goodness was seen to prevail
- This is my presentation's eucatastrophe!

Eucatastrophe: Redeeming Magic & Saving Myth

- George MacDonald (1824-1905)
- G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)
- J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)
- C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Eucatastrophe: Redeeming Magic & Saving Myth

J.R.R. Tolkien, in his essay, “On Fairy-Stories”:

“The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: ‘mythical’ in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe.”

Eucatastrophe: Redeeming Magic & Saving Myth

C.S. Lewis, in his essay “Myth Became Fact,” wrote:

“The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact... By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle... I suspect that men have sometimes derived more spiritual sustenance from myths they did not believe than from the religion they professed... A man who disbelieved the Christian story as fact but continually fed on it as myth would, perhaps, be more spiritually alive than one who assented and did not think much about it.”

Historical Context

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- Eucatastrophe: Redeeming Magic & Saving Myth

Eucatastrophe

- Dark Arts & Other Wicked Ideas?
- Is Harry Potter the devil?
- Sorry, Pastor Jack Brock...
- MacDonald, Chesterton, Tolkien, and Lewis have redeemed magic & saved myth for everyone
- Magic & Myth, including Harry Potter, are with us, at least in part, not in spite of, but because of the tradition recounted in this presentation
- Harry Potter voluntarily presented himself to die a sacrificial death, only to rise again to new life, thereby invoking the “Ancient Magic,” the most powerful magic of all, in order to save everyone from the Dark Arts... Where have we heard that myth before?

Harry
Potter

SAVED

my life.

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- (2)
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Library BILL RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and **enlightenment of all people** of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II Libraries should provide materials and information **presenting all points of view** on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III Libraries should **challenge censorship** in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with **resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas**.

V A person's right to use a library should **not be denied or abridged** because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such **facilities available on an equitable basis**, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 23, 1948, by the A.L.A. Council; amended October 14, 1964; June 15, 1948; February 2, 1965; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1969; resolution of "yes" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

ALA American Library Association  OFFICE FOR Intellectual Freedom

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

Observed since 1982 by the American Library Association, the annual celebration reminds Americans not to take the First Amendment for granted. The event promotes freedom of expression by resisting efforts to ban unpopular or controversial books from library collections.” from “Free People Read Freely” in *Writing*, 09/2004



WHY CELEBRATE?

“While books have been and continue to be banned, part of the Banned Books Week celebration is the fact that, in a majority of cases, the books have remained available. This happens only thanks to the efforts of librarians, teachers, students, and community members who stand up and speak out for the freedom to read,” the ALA stated. -From Newsweek 9/24/17



Your words have the power to challenge censorship. Out of the hundreds of challenges ALA records every year, only about **10%** of books are removed from communal shelves, thanks to local literary champions such as librarians, students, and patrons.

WHERE ARE BOOKS CHALLENGED?



82-97%
of challenges
remain unreported



OFFICE FOR
Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association



TOP 10 CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2016



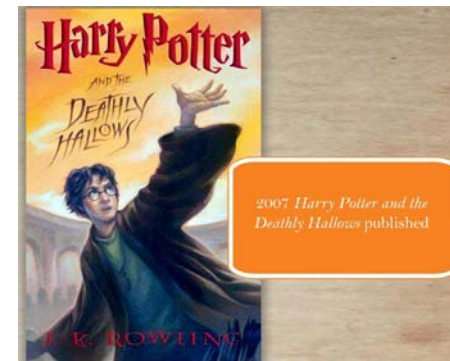
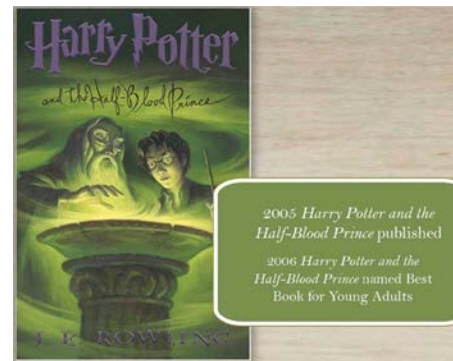
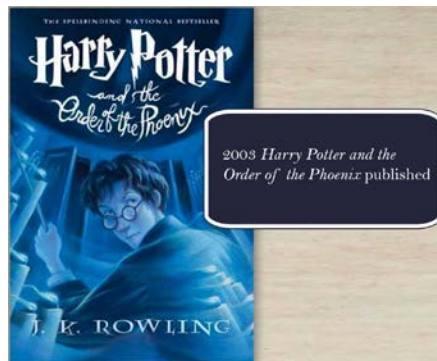
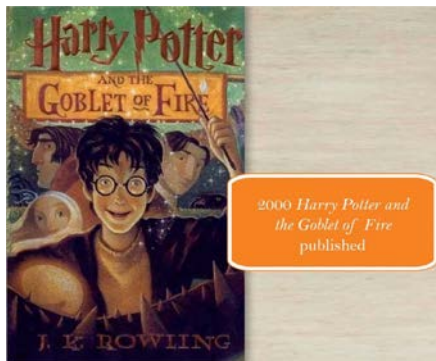
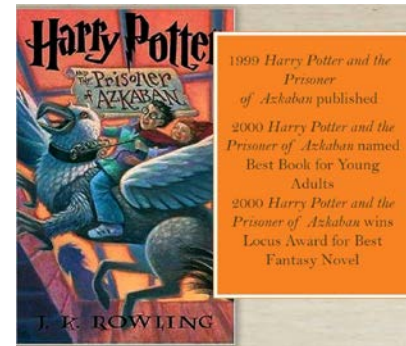
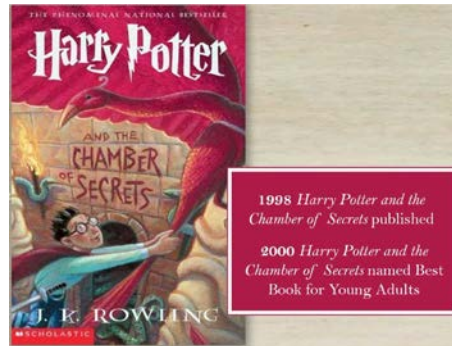
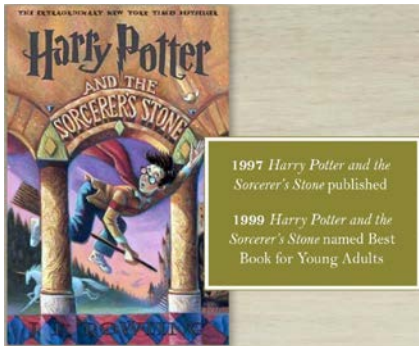
INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND YOUNG PEOPLE

“The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As “Libraries: An American Value” states, “We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children’s use of the library and its resources and services.” Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children’s—and only their children’s—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children.” - Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights



HARRY POTTER SERIES

One of the most challenged books on record is the Harry Potter series, which topped the aggregated 2000-2009 ranking of the decade.” - Newsweek



HARRY POTTER'S HISTORY OF CHALLENGE

- The *Harry Potter* series received 26 formal challenges between the years 1999 and 2007. A sampling of challenges:
 - “The book has a serious tone of death, hate, lack of respect, and sheer evil”
 - Series challenged because the author “is a member of the occult and the book encourages children to practice witchcraft”
 - Challenge because “the book contains lying and smart aleck retorts to adults.”
 - *The Goblet of Fire* was challenged for its “intense story line, the violence, the wizardry, and the sucking of animal blood.”
 - The series was challenged again “due to references to witchcraft and concerns the book will lead children to hatred and rebellion.”
 - Challenged (but retained) because it “makes witchcraft and wizardry alluring to children.”
 - Restricted to students at certain grade levels with parent permission required in several school districts.
- From *Banned Books: Defending our Freedom to Read* (Doyle)



POTTER VICTORY

In 2002 “a federal judge overturned restricted access to the Harry Potter books after parents of a Cedarville (AR) fourth-grader filed a federal lawsuit challenging the restrictions, which required students to present written permission from a parent to borrow the books. The novels were originally challenged because they characterized authority as “stupid” and portrayed “good witches and good magic.” -From "Censorship Watch"



CENSORSHIP IN HARRY POTTER



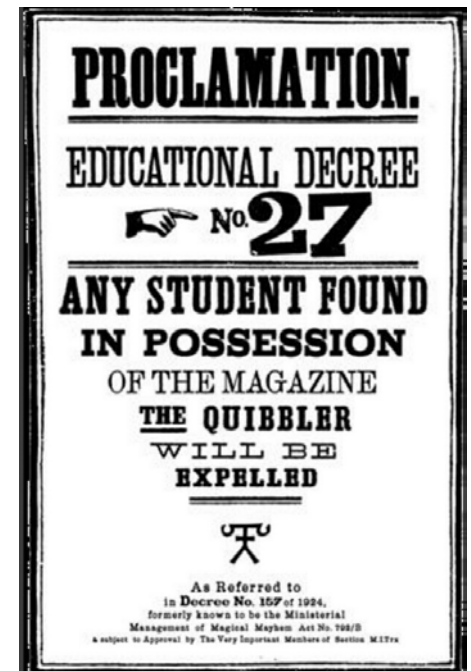
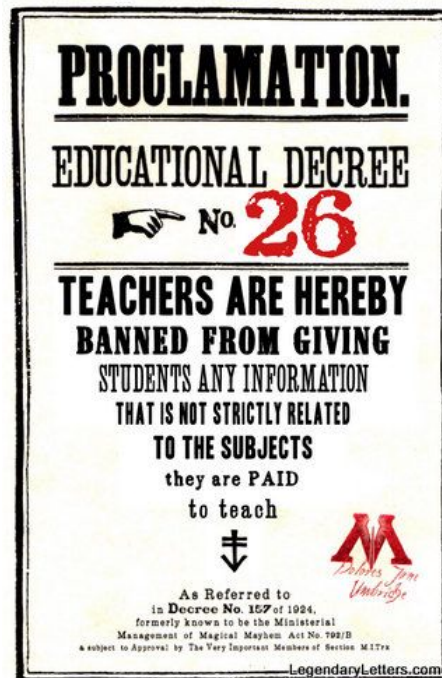
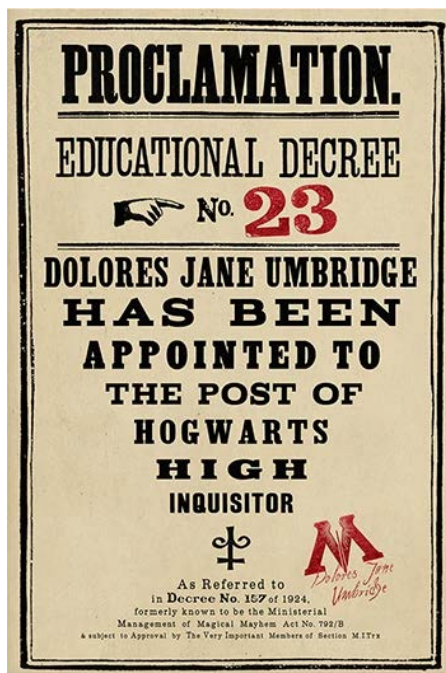


THE RESTRICTED SECTION

“Harry wandered over to the Restricted Section. He had been wondering for a while if Flamel wasn’t somewhere in there. Unfortunately, you needed a specially signed note from one of the teachers to look in any of the restricted books, and he knew he’d never get one. These were the books containing powerful Dark Magic never taught at Hogwarts, and only read by older students studying advanced Defense Against the Dark Arts.” from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*



HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX



THE IRONY

"What Umbridge and the Ministry fail to grasp is the power of stubborn, rebellious curiosity. Any attempt to keep knowledge hidden only makes the seekers yearn for it more." - Jennifer Flaherty



DANGEROUS IDEAS IN HARRY POTTER

“Disturbers of the universe do not always disturb it well, however, nor always for the benefit of humankind.” -Madeleine L’Engle



DESTROYING HORCRUXES

“They were still library books, even if Dumbledore had taken them off the shelves. Anyway, if he really didn’t want anyone to get at them, I’m sure he would have made it much harder to —”

“Get to the point!” said Ron.

“Well . . . it was easy,” said Hermione in a small voice. “I just did a Summoning Charm. You know — Accio. And — they zoomed out of Dumbledore’s study window right into the girls’ dormitory.”

“But when did you do this?” Harry asked, regarding Hermione with a mixture of admiration and incredulity.

“Just after his — Dumbledore’s — funeral,” said Hermione in an even smaller voice. “Right after we agreed we’d leave school and go and look for the Horcruxes. When I went back upstairs to get my things it — it just occurred to me that the more we knew about them, the better it would be . . . and I was alone in there . . . so I tried . . . and it worked. They flew straight in through the open window and I — I packed them.” She swallowed and then said imploringly,

“I can’t believe Dumbledore would have been angry, it’s not as though we’re going to use the information to make a Horcrux, is it?”

-Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows



MADELEINE L'ENGLE'S AND DUMBLEDORE'S WISDOM

“We find what we are looking for. If we looking for life and love and openness and growth, we are likely to find them. If we are looking for witchcraft and evil, we’ll likely find them, and we may get taken over by them.” -Madeleine L’Engle

“Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.” -Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*



SELF-CENSORSHIP

“We all practice some form of censorship. I practiced it simply by the books I had in my house when my children were little. If I am given a budget of \$500 I will be practicing a form of censorship by the books I choose to buy with that limited amount of money, and the books I choose not to buy. But nobody said we were not allowed to have points of view. The exercise of personal taste is not the same thing as imposing personal opinion.” -Madeleine L'Engle



FINAL WORDS

"So, let us look for beauty and grace, for love and friendship, for that which is creative and birth-giving and soul-stretching. Let us dare to laugh at ourselves, healthy affirmative laughter. Only when we take ourselves lightly can we take ourselves really seriously, so that we are given the courage to say, 'Yes! I dare to disturb the universe.'" -Madeleine L'Engle



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Timeline

- ⑩ EIU University Photographer, Bev Cruise

Pictures:

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